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ABSTRACT

Examined is the progress of four major goals of school reform in the Soviet Union as an integral part of Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev's call for a monumental restructuring (perestroika) of society. With the adoption of Fundamental Directions of General Education and Vocational School Reform (1984), four important goals were set in motion; (1) the entrance of six year olds into the primary school to begin the educational process at a more formative point; (2) the incorporation of a universal vocational educational core in the general education program to prepare students for their prescribed roles in the world of work; (3) the strengthening of the role of the teacher in Soviet education and society to improve the effectiveness of instruction and guidance of youth; and (4) the reorganization and decentralization of school administration to make the delivery system more incisive as well as responsive to needs in a multinational school system. (19 references) (SI)

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FOUR GOALS OF SCHOOL REFORM IN THE SOVIET UNION, 1984-1989: A BUMPY JOURNEY FOR PERESTROIKA

by

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Running Head: School Reform in the Soviet Union

Abstract

The initiation of sweeping political, economic and social reforms in the USSR has been the catalyst for the reformulation of educational priorities. This paper examines the progress of four major goals of school reform, 1984-1989, as an integral part of Soviet leader Gorbachev's call for a monumental restructuring (*perestroika*) of society. Armed with an unprecedented blueprint for change his compelling proposals and charasmatic personality have convinced many in his constituency that, indeed, too many Soviet citizens have lost their sense of personal and national destiny. Gorbachev intends to rebuild the world of his countrymen by strengthening the commitment of each citizen. This rededication will depend in part upon an improved system of education. Among the many important steps taken within the last five years to recast matters educational, the adoption of Fundamental Directions of General Education and Vocational School Reform (1984), set in motion at least four important goals. These were: (1) the entrance of six year olds into the

primary school to begin the educational process at a more formative point; (2) the incorporation of a universal vocational educational core in the general education program to prepare students for their prescribed roles in the world of work; (3) the strengthening of the role of the teacher in Soviet education and society to improve the effectiveness of instruction and guidance of youth; and (4) the reorganization and decentralization of school administration to make the delivery system more incisive as well as responsive to needs in a multi-national school system. The permanence and ultimate significance of these goals as well as important other educational changes will depend upon the strength of Gorbachev's leadership to keep the nation unified and focused on revitalizing national priorities. Within this context the champions of educational reform can begin to contend with voices of conservative criticism and to compete for limited resources.

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INTRODUCTION: THE RATIONALE FOR PERESTROIKA

Observers of the world scene as well as students of comparative international education are aware of the well publicized efforts underway in the Soviet Union to restructure its major institutions. (Gorbachev, 1987). Crucial to the success of these efforts is the potency of educational policy makers to change as well as strengthen the kinds of educational opportunities available both to the young and adult populations. (Muckle, 1988).

This paper describes and analyses an initial step toward implementing educational reform within this framework: the adoption of Fundamental Directions of General Education and Vocational School Reform (1984). The comprehensiveness of this historic document will convince any reader that the Soviets meant to lead a powerful charge on past educational practices. It seemed a foregone conclusion to them that no substantive reform aimed at transforming the attitudes, ideas, and practice in both

domestic and foreign policy could succeed without major revisions in the total approach to the pedagogy practiced.

No better spokesperson can describe the enormity and seriousness of the issues the nation has faced than President Mikhail S. Gorbachev himself. Defining *perestroika* (restructuring) as an urgent necessity he has made a compelling case for change in his best seller, Perestroika, and in his remarkable and innumerable public pronouncements. In Gorbachev's dramatic analysis of the problems facing the Soviets he identified every major thread in the fabric of society as frayed or torn and typified the high level of concern espoused by Soviet leaders in the early 1980's.

Many citizens also agreed with Gorbachev's personal acknowledgement that too many Soviet citizens had lost their sense of personal and national destiny. The notion of perestroika struck a responsive chord. Mikhail Sergeyevich was the catalyst, but the receptivity and cooperation of a great nation was necessary to make it happen. Action was taken in April 1985 when the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress adopted a comprehensive plan to translate a

platform of his reforms into concrete economic programs which would involve millions of people.

The educational intelligensia had also begun to express publicly long held private concerns that students throughout the country had diminished motivation, curiosity, and purpose, and that the educational system had sunk into the same morass as the economic and political system. The time was ripe for educational reform at the national level as well and resulted in a remarkable document, Fundamental Directions of General Education and Vocational School Reform, passed six months earlier in December, 1984.

This call for reform operationalized many promises found in Gorbachev's writings which drew substantially upon historical precedents. For example, Gorbachev made a strong case for polytechnic education with its main focus on training youth for future work consistent with the requirements of scientific and technological progress.[1] Education, it seems, would continue to be viewed as the means by which the economic goals of the nation would be met. Gorbachev paired this priority with support for

humanistic education, a familiar old pillar in the philosophic mosaid of Russian thought.[2]

Over decades humanism in Soviet pedagogy has translated into a major and comprehensive set of principles defining a proper socialist upbringing. Gorbachev and other Soviets viewing the degenerate standards of so many young people blamed the teachers. It was they who have been so ineffective in inculcating the doctrines of Leninism and the standards of Communism in the youth of today.

The next logical step, Gorbachev and others reasoned, was to upgrade the teaching force so that it was capable of instructing more creatively and fostering initiative and independence among the learners. Gorbachev called for a more sophisticated professional work force to be recruited, trained, and retrained to meet these ends. Although a personnel program with these dimensions will add greatly to the costs of educational reform, Gorbachev has promised the necessary financial backing. (Gorbachev, 1988).

Without question history will judge ultimately the wisdom of these reforms and those which will follow by the

contribution education can make to its citizens for a better life. In Soviet terms this will translate into a revitalized economy and new personal and political freedoms. At the present time (August, 1989) the situation still remains very serious. Recent Soviet elections for the popularly elected Supreme Soviet repudiated old-time Party liners throughout the Union and elected, among others, defiant populists and critics of the status quo. These much publicized victories have been interpreted by some as symbolic of the popular dissatisfaction with the progress of Gorbachev's reforms.

A moribund economy, unable to turn around quickly enough to meet the basic needs of 285 million people or to assure the place of the USSR as a major power in the 21st Century, tops the list of problems. By some estimates the budget deficit - caused in part by transfusions to anemic factories and by subsidies for food and housing - is about eleven percent of the GNP. The ruble has an exchange rate of $1.60 but cannot be exchanged easily into other currencies and has a black market value of ten cents. The government price control system has repressed the latest inflation. The result: people have more paper money,

estimated at about 300 billion rubles in savings, then there are goods available for purchase. (Isaacson, 1989).

The easing of constraints on freedom of expression, assemblage, religion, and the press have been troublesome, too. The diverse nationalities throughout the Union have strained to establish their own ethnic identities, contrary to the official, nationalistic policies imposed for the past seventy years. The uprisings and political protests in the Crimea, Moldavia, the Baltic states, and between Armenians and Azerbaijanes have tried the patience of the government. As yet Gorbachev has not crafted a workable nationalities policy to handle these crises. Renewed demands for a first class school and higher education system taught in the regional languages in the Republics have fanned the controversy of bilingualism with its insistence that Russian must be mastered by anyone aspiring to the intelligensia.

In June, 1988 Gorbachev analysed in amazing candor the progress or lack of it made in the intervening three years before an assemblage of five thousand delegates which had gathered from all parts of the Soviet Union in Moscow. He praised the

Party's and people's efforts to halt the country from drifting toward economic, social, and spiritual chaos, but insisted that much more needed to be done. Sharing his concerns, Gorbachev spoke with urgency. ("On Progress," 1988)."

Following his opening salvos Gorbachev launched into a four hour, eighteen thousand word speech in which he detailed once again the troika of his reforms: perestroika, glasnost, and democratizatsiya. He listed the important priorities and the recommended programs. ("On Progress," 1988). As might be anticipated, Gorbachev characterized each one of these before the assemblage with graphic illustrations as to where successes and failures prevailed. From this the delegates passed a number of new resolutions setting the course for more intense action.[3] The delegates did not fail to endorse an ambitious commitment to educational progress at all levels.

THE SCOPE OF THE 1984 EDUCATIONAL REFORMS.

Abetted by the spirit of *glasnost* (openness) millions of people participated in a remarkable number of meetings for the avowed purpose of recasting educational priorities.[4]

In its formal resolution presenting the 1984 reforms the Communist Party Central Committee claimed that 120 million people had attended meetings to discuss the reforms and that seven million spoke to the issues. G. A. Aliev, a member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee and First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers (April 12, 1984), declared that the collective common sense from all this intense deliberation had resulted in the insertion of one hundred addenda, clarifications, and corrections into the text of the final document.

Aliev promised that the many other deserving and practical suggestions (not included in Fundamental Directions) would be taken into account in the preparation of resolutions implementing the reforms or circulated to government ministries and departments for further study. (Aliev, 1984). As might be expected, the rising expectations created by this unprecedented publicity began to sow the seeds of discontent among the Soviet people when the government's effort flagged.[5]

At the time, however, on April 10th and 12th, respectively, the CPSU Central Committee Plenum and the USSR Supreme Soviet endorsed with great fanfare forty-one separate reform statements on education, organized into eight separate categories. (Fundamental Directions, 1985). Among the more notable were those relating to the lowering of admission age to the first grade from seven to six years old, thus extending the (universal) general education school from a ten to an eleven year program (reform # 4); the providing for universal general vocational education (reform #5); the improving of working conditions for teachers, including pay raises (reform # 34); and optimizing the administration of public education (reforms #38-41). (Fundamental Directions, 1985). An analysis of these four reforms five years after their adoption indicates the kinds of roadblocks facing the Soviets.

The Entrance of the Six Year Olds. The Soviet educational community long had been convinced that six year olds had the ability to meet the demands of the primary school curriculum. Successful programs dating back to the 1930's demonstrating the psychological and physiological readiness of the six year olds to matriculate are well

documented in Soviet Union studies. The 1984 reforms then made universal a highly regarded practice, the implementation of which depended upon available space. The additional year of instruction also provided at least two distinct advantages from the standpoint of national purpose.

First, as previously mentioned, the Soviets have always had a tremendous interest in inculcating the Marxist-Leninist ideology of upbringing to shape the total personality and world view of youth. Broadly defined this has meant that young Soviet citizens learn an integrated system of Communist ideas, attitudes, and concepts. (Monoszon, 1989). To achieve this, opportunities to practice and perfect these important principles realistically need to be present in every arena of the learners' environment so that they can become productive members of society in Soviet terms. Again, thoughtful observers have shuddered at the state of indifference and lethargy of so many Soviet youth. They have appeared to lack any understanding or interest in Communist morality with its emphasis on a sense of civic duty and commitment to the proposition that all the benefits enjoyed by society and its members depend on the

honest and dedicated labor of each. The chance now to engage the minds of the young in formal instruction one year earlier holds the promise to strengthen the upbringing component and restore the moral fibre of society.

Second, for those children learning Russian as a second language, no small problem in a country with more than one hundred languages, the additional year of instruction is viewed as a way to facilitate mastery and help solidify national purpose. (Baranova and Rozyeva, 1985).

Facility planners anticipating the onslaught calculated that between 1986 and 1990 an estimated 1.2 million six year olds could be phased into the primary schools. The largest cohort was expected in 1990. At best this was an ambitious undertaking as in 1984 the number of six year olds in the first grade was unknown but estimated to be very small. However, the planners were confident that space available would develop from the drop in the national birthrate and from the shrinkage in national school enrollment, down from 49.2 to 44.3 million between 1970 and 1980. (Szekely, 1986).

It now appears that these projections were faulty and that many more six year olds are seeking enrollment than can be accommodated, at least in the 1980's. (The latest count halfway through the Twelfth Five Year Plan (1988) indicated that half of the six year old cohort was enrolled and that plans to extend the elementary program from three to four years were underway but still a distant goal.) (Szekely, April, 1988).

Overcrowding will still continue to be a problem although the 1984 reforms promised relief. (Reform #12. "Extreme class overcrowding is to be relieved.)" The optimal size for grades I-IX was suggested at 30; grades X-XI, 25. (Fundamental Directions, 1985). Statistics on overcrowding have been unavailable until recently. With the advent of *glasnost* the Soviet press and other publications are beginning to present data which describe dramatically the parameters of the problem. A fifty percent overload exists in nurseries for six months to three year old children where the norm is eighteen and in the three year kindergartens where the norm is twenty-five per class .[6]

In 1986 thirty percent of Soviet schools housed eight million elementary and secondary students who used these facilities on a daily double session basis. There is no question that the advent of the six year old population has intensified school housing problems despite a school construction target to increase space by twenty percent, a Twelfth Five-Year Plan goal, 1986-1990. (Szekely, 1986).

A speech given by G. Y. Yagodin, the head of the new USSR State Committee on Public Education, in the summer of 1988 emphasized that solutions to these kinds of problems continue to elude the Soviets. He reported that half the country's schools do not have central heating, running water or sewerage. One-fourth of the children attend school in two shifts; some of them in three shifts. One and a half million children do not at the present have the opportunity to attend kindergarten. "These are old problems. There has been virtually no increase in the percentage of national income spent on public education in the past years...." ("Speech by Comrade," 1988). The health of these schoolchildren continues to be of serious concern. The Ministry of Education reported that fifty-three percent of children are unhealthy, and that the percentage of

unhealthy children increases from sixty-six percent to seventy-five percent during the period of instruction. ("Speech by Comrade," 1988).

In another speech in December of 1988 Yagodin suggested at least one cause for the scarcity of space in educational housing. "...builders and local agencies have been responsible for the irretrievable loss at our facilities of more than one billion rubles allocated by the government for the construction of educational institutions." ("Education Congress," 1988).

Despite these misappropriations Gorbachev reported earlier that construction of secondary schools and nurseries and kindergartens was up twenty-two percent and thirty percent, respectively. ("On Progress," 1988). Yet reports stream in from all parts of the Soviet Union expressing alarm over governmental building priorities. A director of a school in the Khorezm Region of Uzbek noted that twenty thousand children had been born in the city of Urgench, yet schools accommodating only four thousand had been built in the same time period. Considering this acute shortage of schools it had made the director's heart ache to see the zeal

with which all kinds of luxurious hotels and magnificant administrative buildings had been built and to see the headquarters of these projects headed up by city and region officials. ("A Speech by Iakubova," 1988).

As noted below it is doubtful that the Soviet economy can address fully a seventy year build-up of educational needs, exaccerbated by stronger competition from other Soviet institutions and power bases (*e.g.* the Party and governmental bureaucracy, the military establishment, heavy/light industries, and agriculture.) The costs for new and improved school facilities are staggering. Although exact projections from the USSR are not readily available, comparable figures from California which is projecting a new student population of 780,000 over a five year period (1986-1991) provide a scale. The Department of Finance estimates that twenty-six thousand new classrooms will cost at least $3.8 billion and that deferred maintenance requests will total more than $2 billion by 1990. ("Facilities & Students," 1986). As the U.S. and USSR school population is approximately the same size and California represents one tenth of that population, it is clear that funds for

facilities will present an ongoing challenge for both countries.

The Goal of Universal Vocational Education. Serious difficulties lie ahead for the Soviets in their ideal to incorporate a universal vocational education emphasis within the tracks of the general education program. This has been a time-honored socialist principle to train youth for the world of work and strategic placement into employment which meets the goals of national priorities.

A review of the planned new organizational structure and projected percentages of students in Soviet schools suggests implementation problems.

Elementa y School: Grades I-IV (100%)
Incomplete Secondary School: Grades V-IX (100%)
Complete Secondary School: Grades X-XI (100%)
**Strand 1 Secondary Vocational-Technical Schools (67%)
**Strand 2 Sr. Secondary General Education Schools (33%)
(Szekely, 1985).

At first glance it would seem that the expansion of universal vocational education (the opportunity to master an occupation before starting to work) should be well underway at least among sixty-seven percent of secondary school graduates. However, the above percentages have not been realized and represent targets for 1990. The present distribution of students finds about sixty percent in the senior secondary general education school and an estimated forty percent divided between innumerable vocational-technical schools and the newly designed secondary vocational-technical school. Nevertheless, even among the forty percent population of vocational technical school graduates disturbing statistics suggest a need for better career counseling to promote employment stability.

L. A. Kostin, the First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Committee for Labor and School Problems, an agency responsible for overseeing the entrance of youth into the work force, has reported that fifteen to twenty percent of vocational-technical school entrants are not well suited personally for the work they have selected. As a result from twenty to thirty percent of the vocational-technical school graduates do not show up at the places where,

legally, they are to fulfill a job placement immediately after graduation. Furthermore, forty percent of these graduates change their occupations shortly after entering the labor force. At present, an overwhelming majority of Soviet youths are not being trained for specific careers that they will follow after graduation beyond a short period of employment. (Szekely, 1986). The abilities and inclinations of the students along with the wishes of their parents and recommendations from the incomplete secondary schools, it seems, must be given a higher priority

The goal of vocational education in the senior secondary general education school seems even more problematic and has caused extensive comment among the Soviets themselves and students of comparative education in the USSR. At a national conference on vocational education (1985) Moldavian Republic Minister of Education, D. G. Zidu recognized the dysfunctionality in training "the better prepared youth with high level intellectual potential" in both a full academic curriculum of general education studies simultaneoulsy for work in "the more simple occupations." (Szekely, 1986). This issue continues to cause serious debate among educators and other planners for the

future.[7] Recent action directing the revision of this reform was taken at the February, 1988 plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU which reflected the widespread skepticism concerning the wisdom of training all general education secondary school students for mass, semiskilled occupations in the Soviet economy. (Szekely, July, 1988).

Still the Soviets are not going to let the goal of universal vocational education be thwarted in the general education school as increasing numbers of seventeen year olds must be prepared for places in the labor force. For certain the demands of the national economy will prevail. One arrangement has included extracurricular courses at production training workshops and farming plots located directly at schools and at local or district inter-school production training centers. In 1986 it was estimated that thirty-five percent of senior grade students underwent job training in workshops located directly at the industrial enterprises. (Szekely, 1986). Vocational education aside, all students within the general education school curriculum must study polytechnical education with its emphasis on learning the scientific principles underlying industrial and agricultural production and their major applications. Such

a curriculum forges a pedagogical link to Soviet Marxist ideology, *i.e.* "to strengthen the tie of the school to life." (Szekely, 1986).

The Teacher in Soviet Society. "Success in resolving the complex tasks of the teaching and upbringing of youth depends to a decisive extent, upon the teacher, (the level) of his ideological conviction, his professional mastery, erudition, and (the level of his overall) cultivation." (Fundamental Directions, 1985). Reform #30 pledges a monumental effort to elevate the teachers' spiritual and intellectual life and improve the standards of their professional training for what is truly "a high calling." Special emphasis has been promised to upgrade their material situation. (Fundamental Directions, 1985).

The allocation of resources to achieve these goals has placed education in the Soviet Union as a major contender for financial support in a hard pressed economy of the 1980's. Beatrice Szekely and others have documented well the vital need for teacher reforms to succeed as basic to the overall permanence of *perestroika*. Without it the necessary improved morale of teachers and their

accompanying improved performance will fail to materialize. This cannot help but cause a serious dimunition in the scope of the reforms realized. Also a failure to upgrade the creature comforts for professionals will continue to make it unattractive for teachers to work in the outlying rural areas where forty percent of the Soviet children live. Soviet men have not been recruited to the ranks for apparent reasons, too. At present between seventy and eighty percent of the profession are women. (Szekely, 1986). At a recent conference of the Comparative International and Educational Society, Dr. Zoya Malkova, a noted Soviet educator, emphasized in her address the importance in finding teachers of excellence who could affect the quality of instruction. She wondered aloud, "but where do we find these people?"[8]

Available statistics show that salaries in Soviet education have not kept up with those for other professional groups. In 1982 the average monthly salary of workers in public education, including highly paid instructors in higher education, was 137.5 rubles. This ranked fourteenth place among comparative groups and reflected a slippage from ninth place in 1965. To remedy these deficiencies in April,

1984 Chairman Chernenko announced an overall salary increase of 35.7 percent for Ministry of Education employees in the preschool and general education school, a 30.4 percent increase for vocational-technical school teachers, and a 29.7 percent increase for those at secondary specialized institutions. All these were to be phased in between 1984 and 1987. (Szekely, 1986).

More recent statistics (1988) report an average salary for the education sector of 195 rubles, still under the 203 rubles that is average for industrial workers and white collar employees. Among the most poorly paid and those for whom the most critical demand had been generated are elementary teachers (usually in rural areas) employed at school boarding hostels; teachers at children's state homes; and teachers at vocational-technical schools for agriculture and the mining industry. These categories of professionals received the first round of salary improvement. The next critical target group which has received increases are teachers and administrators in those geographic areas of the country with the worst shortage of qualified professionals: the far north, far east, the Urals economic

region, and other hard to staff places. The prospects still do not look good (1989).

Yagodin reports that the teacher's lack of prestige and low social status remains the major problem. According to data from an investigation conducted by the teacher trade union's central committee, at present over three hundred thousand teachers are waiting to obtain housing. One-fifth of all urban teachers live in dormatories, and one-third of all rural teachers rent space from the public. In rural areas of the Ukraine and Georgia, more than half of the teachers are in this position. Yagodin's continued list of deprivations showed that a teacher can get accommodations in a sanitorium only once in his lifetime, and he cannot buy books. Buying food is a persistent problem, even in rural areas. ("Education Congress," 1988).

As reflected in reforms #30-35, underway are efforts to reduce the teaching load for primary school teachers from twenty-four to twenty hours of lesson time per week, to increase the length of the training programs at pedagogical institutes from four to five years for teachers of the school disciplines, to initiate frequent (every four to five years)

teacher retraining programs, to upgrade the quality of teacher training in the universities and to mandate that universities do more to help pedagogical higher educational institutions in the development of scientific research work and in raising the qualifications of research and teaching cadres. (Fundamental Directions, 1985).

Optimizing the Administration of Public Education. From reforms #38-41 it is clear that the Soviets want to overhaul the existing administrative bureaucracy and make it an efficient delivery system. Administrators are to tackle the most pressing problems in "a timely and creative fashion" and raise the standards of work in all educational institutions. They are also not to neglect improving the evaluative system and streamlining the inspection and monitoring process in schools and other teaching and upbringing institutions.

Especially important to the reformers is the elimination of the spate of paper work which has distracted the educational community from its vital and creative job of instructing and nurturing pupils. In the place of excessive bureaucratic oversight the reformers have specified that

more time be paid to the study, popularization, and application of advanced teaching and upbringing experience, "with no leeway given to either a dismissive attitude toward innovative ventures or to giving those same ventures a knee-jerk kind of publicity." (Fundamental Directions, 1985). This has led to a popular conviction that decentralization of administration will help to eliminate the Soviet pre-occupation with conformity, regulation, and rigidity.

The role of principals in the general education schools and vocational-technical training schools also has come under the purview of the reformers. Principals have been advised to exercise creativity in organizing the teaching and upbringing process. Those responsible for the work of these principals have been cautioned to reduce their academic work load. The importance of the grade level teacher's role and authority has been underscored, too.

The reformers have instructed those in the role of evaluation, presumably these principals, grade level teachers, and regional inspectors, to develop demonstrably valid criteria by which to measure the work done by the

teacher and the school. Suggested criteria for this evaluation have included more objective standards upon which to base student learning. This results-oriented system of measurement has specified that the success of school and teacher activity be held up against standards defined first of all by the depth and durability of the knowledge they impart; second, by the ideological and moral qualities that their wards exhibit; and third, by their readiness for life and labor. (Fundamental Directions, 1985). It is interesting to note that the reformers have not acknowledged that despite the naming of these criteria, measurement and evaluation of student progress continue to vex professional education in every country of the world, no matter how prescribed the educational philosophy. The complexity of the human organism has defied definitive analysis.

To accomplish all this an administrative shakeup in the top eschelons of education became a reality when Gorbachev appointed (1985), Sergei Georgievich Shcherbakov as USSR Minister of Education.[9] (Mikhail Alekseievich Prokof'ev who had held this position since 1966 retired, allegedly for health reasons.) As Szekely and others have observed, the

Prokof'ev replacement early on in the turnover of top officials throughout the Soviet government was a clear signal from Gorbachev that the reorganization of the education ministry was a high priority and would portend other kinds of changes to come. (Szekely, 1986).

In Shcherbakov the reform movement found an able administrator determined to improve the administration of the national school and the teacher training system under his jurisdiction. (Panachin, 1986). Shcherbakov carved out a role for himself in which he chose to comment on the broader issues as he saw them. A primary target was inept school administration and persistent problems in the organization of educational research at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, an organizational unit in the Ministry of Education. It was he who announced the new school curriculum, consistent with the reformed, eleven year structure of the general education school, and the planned advent of six year olds i o the new first grade. (Szekely, 1986).

The new political leadership which Shcherbakov represented at the time reflected Gorbachev's commitment

to establishing a more dynamic and effective approach, as distinguished from the faltering maneuvers of former bureaucrats.[10] It did not signify that truly radical reforms were in the wings but that changes would be made in a measured way. (Elliott, 1985). The object at that time was to improve the existing order without fundamentally transforming the present social, political, and economic foundations or going beyond the prevailing ideological values. The overriding considerations continued to be improving the compulsory general education program and expanding vocational educational opportunities, thereby preparing all pupils for their future work. A minority of the students were scheduled to go onto further education.

As mentioned above, changes in the basic organization of the school system were intended to provide the necessary format for other reforms. Shcherbakov's administration of the Soviet preschool/school system (as differentiated from higher education and vocational education) faced enormous challenges to accomplish this reorganization. These stemmed from a holdover system used by the Soviets to train and place their youth from the age of fifteen into the world of work. The imperative to meet national economic

goals coupled with limited space in a national senior secondary program had prompted each of the fifteen republics to establish alternative training routes. The result was a proliferation of vocational-technical schools run by the many ministries in the industrial, agricultural, and service sectors of the economy. The goal of these schools was to train skilled job recruits in narrowly specialized programs of from one to three years' duration. The State Committee for Vocational and Technical Education, not within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, had provided uneven coordination and direction of these schools.

The reforms addressed this problem and called for all these present vocational-technical schools to be combined into the new secondary vocational-technical school as described above. The course of study is to include a slightly modified version of the senior secondary school curriculum combined with an occupational training program. Plans have been made to establish other new vocational-technical schools for graduates of the complete general secondary education school which will offer an additional year of occupational training. (Szekely, 1986).

Shcherbakov's success depended upon his ability to smooth out a number of tough problems. First, he had to deal with the difficulties inherent in the Ministry's expansion of the vocational-technical school programs, both pre-and post-general secondary education school. Second, he needed to support the State Committee for Vocational and Technical Education's efforts to coordinate the many ministries involved in vocational-technical education throughout the Republic. Yet, Shcherbakov was powerless to straighten out the organizational and jurisdictional overlap between that Committee's operation and his own. Third, he had to wage a public relations campaign in the education community and with parents and students for the planned (and unpopular) redistribution of the fifteen year old population. Fourth, he had to trouble-shoot the inevitable overlap in responsibilities between the Ministry of Education and the State Committee for Vocational and Technical Education in overseeing the general education curriculum and the teacher training program. (Szekely, 1986). Shcherbakov's limited span of control undermined his chances to effect any changes on a grand scale in the limited amount of time given him.[11]

Overall coordination seemed the key especially in view of the reverberations school reform was continuing to make on higher education programs. The disjointed organizational structure from first grade through graduate education in the fifteen republics permitted redundancies in instruction, supported miscalculation in the numbers of students needed for important jobs in the economy, tolerated the lack of quality and excellence in programs, and encouraged teachers, administrators, and staff in their complacency and satisfaction with the *status quo*. Problems of this magnitude demanded action.

As Gorbachev has been unrelenting in his drive to create nothing less than a new Soviet Union within the foreseeable future, he made a bold administrative change. In April, 1988 the Politburo CPSU Central Committee approved his plan for a newly created USSR State Committee on Public Education, headed up by Gennady Yagodin (formerly Minister of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education). This new State Committee united in one department the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education, and the USSR State Committee for Vocational and Technical Education. Its

charge is (1) to develop strategies to improve curriculum and instruction with special attention to fortifying the value-ladden Socialist upbringing course of study and (2) to forecast and plan for the future. The expectation is that local educational administration units will have more authority and that substantial reductions in the number of administrative personnel will occur. ("New State Committee," 1988) Too much centralization based on bureaucratic commands was blamed for all the failed reforms of the past.

A careful monitoring of the many fateful decisions of the new Committee on Public Education will provide the evidence necessary to determine how powerful its impact will be on the change process and how comfortablely the system can tolerate it.

CONCLUSION

Gorbachev's leadership rests on the success of perestroika, glasnost, and democratizatsiya as galvanizers for the new Soviet man and woman who will lead the second stage of

the Revolution. Creativity, independence, initiative, resourcefulness, and technical intelligence will be important personality dimensions among a citizenry charged with recasting a new society. Intense activity and monumental cooperation in many arenas and among millions of people will be vital to accomplish this.

If the educational establishment can be mobilized quickly, chances for success are even better. Good teachers will need retraining, and superior people will need to be enticed into the profession. A further consideration is balance in the overall: the commitment to decentralize educational administration yet the preservation of a quality curriculum and instructional program; the practice of democraticization in relationships yet an understanding that freedom has its responsibilities; and the accepatance of new ways of thinking yet an acknowledgement that fundamentals change slowly.

Stirrings portend that Soviet teachers will have greater opportunities for empowerment; school administrators at the local and district levels may dare to take proactive stances; and academics in education may engage once again

in meaningful research to support some of the popular hypotheses of the day. A number of important professional educational issues need serious attention if a more effective delivery system is to be chartered out. None of these present the hurdle that the funding and meeting of other national priorities do. Whether education as an institution can stand up to the competition for funds remains an unknown. Even impartial observers in the study of comparative education, however, hardly can remain disinterested on the sidelines. The Soviet Union is in ferment. The stakes for that nation and the rest of the world hang in the balance.

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NOTES

1. Polytechnic education in Soviet terminology means acquainting pupils with contemporary production theory and practice and with the relationship between society and production. (This word production is commonly used in Russian to mean industry in the broadest sense.) Polytechnic education also means "effective labour training," the formation of working skills, knowledge enough to make a rational choice of career, and of foundation for consequent professional training. (Muckle, 1988)

2. The great 19th Century spokesman for humanitarian education was N. I. Pirogov. He believed that the primary goal of education was to prepare humankind for the "inner struggle." This translated into a general curriculum in which time would be devoted to developing the students' inner strengths and character. This did not exclude the existence of special schools with practical or applied aims. However, such further study would be built on the foundation of a humanitarian education base. Hans, N. (1963). The Russian Tradition in Education. London: Routedge & Kegan Paul.

3. Readers should refer to weekly issues of The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 40 (20-38).

4. Readers interested in the kinds of educational issues raised should consult several sources. Refer to The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 36 (3, 4, 8, 9, 14).

Soviet Education 27 (6-7) also includes useful translations from the Teacher's Gazette, Uchitel'skaia gazetta, a thrice weekly national newspaper published in Moscow. Good excerpts include, V. Tendriakov's, The School and Self-Knowledge, pp. 79-84; The CPSU Central Committee Draft: The Teacher's View, The Draft is Good! Let the Building Begin, pp. 85-92; I. Zverev's (VicePresident of the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences), Pedagogical Science on School Reform: One Year Earlier (Parts I, II, III), pp. 93-98; 99-103; 104-108;

Refer to a lengthy report in this same issue of Soviet Education from the editors of Kommunist as found in A Matter That Affects the Interests of the Entire People, pp. 48-78.

5. For readers interested in examining the cyclical history of educational reforms in the Soviet Union which predated the 1980's (and also had its disillusionments) I. Borisov's article presents a succinct analysis, dating from 1905-1907 and the Bolshevik's call for fundamental school reform. (Borisov holds the academic degree of doctor of history and the rank of professor and is a deputy section head in the Institute of History at the USSR

Academy of Sciences). Realization of the Communist Party's Program for the Development of Public Education. Soviet Education, 27 (5), 1-21.

6. On my recent visit to the Soviet Union (June-July, 1988) I had an opportunity to visit two preschool programs, one in Krasnador on the Leninsvill collective farm and the other in the city of Sochi, Kindergarten # 24, the small ship." Enrollments were at the norm or under; however, the principals reported that overcrowding was a pervasive problem.

7. In speaking with a prominent Soviet academician, Professor Victor V. Kabakchi (Leningrad, July 10, 1988) of the Leningrad Pedagogical Institute I was able to verify that the intelligensia held very strongly negative opinions concerning the efficacy of the universal vocational education for the intellectually elite. A similar position was expressed to me by Igor A. Yurin, Dean of Foreign Students, Kuban State Medical. Institute. (Krasnodar, July 3, 1988).

8. Zoya Malkova, "Key Principles of *Perestroika* in Soviet Education." An unpublished address given at the annual conference of the Comparative International and Educational Society, Harvard University, April 1, 1989. Dr. Malkova is the Director, Institute of General Pedagogics, Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, Moscow, USSR.

9. Shcherbakov's career which included over thirty years in Party political administration prepared him uniquely for this new assignment. He had served with distinction the previous eleven years as First Deputy Head of the Department of Research and Educational Institutions, the powerful Communist Party decision-making body whose policy and personnel decisions outrank those of the USSR Ministry of Education's executive Collegium. On his sixtieth birthday, Shcherbakov was awarded the order of Lenin by the USSR Supreme Soviet in recognition of "services (already rendered) in the developement of learning and public education...." (Szekely, 1986).

10. That Shcherbakov had not been identified with any innovation since his appointment to head the Ministry had been the subject of some speculation; however, a reasonable explanation may lie in his long previous association with the educational operation of the Central Committee. This would seem to have involved him in the development of recommendations for innovative policies relating to labor training which could not be instituted in the 1970's. The establishment of occupational guidance centers in schools and the expansion of local and regional inter-school production training centers are two examples of such reforms planned at that time but not implemented until the 1980's. In other words, no doubt Shcherbakov was thoroughly familiar with the gamut of proposals in the new educational reform when he came to office and had had prior influence in their casting.

11. A brief review of the organization of post complete secondary school offers an explanation why Shcherbakov's effort could not be effective totally. Further technical-vocational education opportunites did continue under the auspices of the USSR Ministry of Higher Education and Secondary Specialized Education. This was separate from the jurisdiction of the USSR Ministry of Education which Shcherbakov headed.

The so called secondary specialized education program (post complete secondary school) included technicums and training colleges while higher education encompassed institutes and the universities. The furcated education routes taken by the graduates of the ten and eleven year programs needed coordination with the school feeder programs. Currently one third of the secondary general education school graduates go onto secondary specialized educational institutions or higher education institutes and universities; one third enter one-year job training programs in technical schools; and one third go directly to work where on the job training may be an option. (Szekely, 1985).

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